

The Glanville Fritillary (*Melitaea cinxia* L.)
in Gloucestershire

By J. E. GREEN*

On the afternoon of the 8th June, 1977 in warm sunshine following a spell of poor weather, my wife and I set out to explore a remote part of the Cotswolds. At about 4 p.m. we had arrived by chance and paused on a rough piece of ground near a wood where a considerable number of insects was on the wing. Numerous species had been noted, when an odd looking butterfly appeared which I followed until it settled. To my utter amazement I saw that it was a fresh Glanville Fritillary ♂. During the next hour it reappeared at intervals and I succeeded in taking a number of photographs.

The next day I contacted Charles Cuthbert, the Executive and Conservation Officer for the Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation about the discovery, and on 16th June I took him to the site. After about half an hour when it began to look as if our journey was in vain, the Glanville suddenly appeared, and again a photograph was taken. Subsequent detailed study of the colour slides revealed that it was not the one seen on the 8th.

Constraints of bad weather, work and distance precluded another visit until 23rd June, when I took my old friend and butterfly enthusiast Gordon Haines to the site, and in good weather we saw at least three different Glanvilles, a fresh ♀ and two ♂, one slightly worn and one freshly emerged, about 150 yards from the main area. It was now clear that this was a small wild colony. Only one other visit was possible, on 4th July with G.H. again, when another ♀ was seen.

This appears to be the first record of the species in Gloucestershire. Knowledge of the location has been limited to four people for the present. However, if the butterfly has been introduced, which seems highly probable, then someone else will know unless the release was made some distance from the site. The Trust are appealing to anyone who knows of any release of stock of this species in the county to come forward and give details. In the absence of such evidence, the origin of the colony so far from the Isle of Wight will remain a mystery. Could it possibly be an example of this species attempting to increase its range northwards during that totally exceptional summer of 1976? Other species turned up well away from their normal haunts, but the Glanville is so local on the I. of W., and Gloucestershire so far away, that it must be extremely unlikely.

Another intriguing factor about the site is that there is an adjacent meadow, and so there is quite good agreement with the description given by Stephens in 1827: "This is a very local species and is found in meadows by the sides of woods." It is a beautifully sheltered warm spot with plenty of narrow leafed plantain. May be released stock found it in some mysterious way, or is it conceivable that the Glanville

* 25 Knoll Lane, Poolbrook, Malvern, Worcs. WR14 3JU.

has been present all the time in Gloucestershire? It could never be proved, but one can reflect on cases like the discovery of *Carterocephalus palaemon* Pallas in North Scotland in 1939, when everyone thought it was confined to the East Midlands.

It is perhaps of interest to list the other species originally found at the site, which caused us to pause awhile on that memorable afternoon. They were: *Aglais urticae* L., *Callophrys rubi* L., *Pyrgus malvae* L., *Erynnis tages* L., *Hamearis lucina* L., *Coenonympha pamphilus* L., *Gonepteryx rhamni* L., *Anthocharis cardamines* L., *Pieris napi* L., *Aricia agestis* D. & S., *Polyommatus icarus* Rott., *Ectypa glyphica* L., *Euclidimera mi* Clerck and *Ematurga atomaria* L. We look forward eagerly to a visit next year.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that no specimens have been taken and that photography has proved a valuable aid in assessing the colony.

A RECENT OCCURRENCE OF *PHYLLOTRETA VITTATA* F. (= *SINUATA* AUCT. BRIT.) (COL.: CHRYSOMELIDAE). — This "turnip flea" is, as Fowler (1890, *Col. Brit. Isl.*, 4: 367) states, a rare species with us; though at least one instance is known of its occurrence in plenty, when the eminent coleopterist just mentioned found it commonly at Eskdale, Cumb., in 1911 (Fowler & Donisthorpe, 1913, *ibid.*, 6: 292). Donisthorpe himself never took the species, despite being—as he told me—particularly desirous of so doing in order to complete his series of the Phyllotretae. Yet the records are comparatively numerous, except for the last half-century for which period there are hardly any; the former fact may, I think, be due to its having long been known as a rarity to collectors who therefore took the trouble to publish their captures, which could give the impression that it is commoner than it really is. For the extreme southern counties there are only two quite old records (N. Kent and N. Cornwall); the bulk are for East Anglia and Wales across the Midlands and through the north of England.

I was pleased to find *P. vittata* for the first time at Foulden, near Swaffham in W. Norfolk, at the beginning of September 1973, while spending a few days with my friends Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Gould. It was in their kitchen garden, then only just "reclaimed" from the fallow state and overrun with horseradish (*Armoracia*). I was unable to decide whether the flea-beetles—obtained by general sweeping—were coming off that or other equally suitable crucifers present (cabbage, charlock, etc.) or from all indifferently; it was distinctly uncommon, and patient work was needed to secure a fair series. Its close relative *P. undulata* Kuts. occurred with it in similar numbers. Under a lens, the *P. vittata* were easily discriminated by the form of the yellow elytral stripes, which is its chief characteristic. It should be noted that this species has always been ascribed in our literature to the *sinuata* of Stephens, whereas the latter is now ascertained to be synonymous with *flexuosa* Ill. — A. A. ALLEN.